eZ-Audit

Frequently Asked Questions for Case Teams

February 15, 2003

What is eZ-Audit?

eZ-Audit will provide schools with a **paperless single point of submission for financial statements and compliance audits through the web**. When the submission goes live in 2003, it will make the reporting process much easier for schools and help FSA better service their needs. The application will be easy to use.

A designee from the school will simply sign on to eZ-Audit, enter summary audit and financial data directly from their report into a web form, attach an electronic version of the report, and hit the submit button. The submission through eZ-Audit will allow for more rapid and efficient processing by the Department of Education and therefore provide schools with more immediate feedback.

What was involved in the eZ-Audit development process?
Project development began in the winter of 2001 with actual system development beginning in September 2002. A core team was created to help design the system, with members consisting of: staff from Data Management and Analysis (project manager, Randy Wolff), staff from Case Management Teams, and members of the Integration Partner Team. Additional development support was also provided by functional experts from PIP and Case Management (including regional staff).

How does eZ-Audit work?
1. The school submits its compliance audit data and summary financial data via an internet web form
2. The school also attaches an electronic copy of their financial statement and compliance audit in a non-editable pdf format (using Adobe Acrobat)
3. The eZ-Audit system automatically forwards flagged financials and deficient audits to FSA's Case Management Team for resolution
4. Case Teams communicate with schools to reach resolution
5. As desired, schools can periodically check eZ-Audit for the status of their reports

How does eZ-Audit Benefit Schools?
- Schools will receive instant acknowledgement of receipt – no more lost reports!
- Schools will no longer need to make any copies or send reports in the mail to ED.
- Processing times will be greatly reduced, thus allowing for remediation of findings.
- Web forms will contain pre-populated fields.

- There are no new reporting requirements – data entry will be limited to the same data already contained in the reports.
- The time spent submitting these forms should be less than 1 hour.
- Status of school's submissions will be accessible to them online at anytime.
- A Help Desk will be available for assistance.

How does eZ-Audit Benefit You?
- EZ-Audit will help improve your effectiveness and efficiency by providing:
  - o Elimination of the need to ship financial statements and audits back and forth between headquarters and the regions
  - o Immediate electronic access to financial statements and audits
  - o Electronic transfer of work products between staff and managers (ie FAD and LOC requests)
  - o Focus on "troubled" findings rather than all submissions
  - o In-depth analysis capability using more detailed data
- EZ-Audit will allow for data trending to provide evidential support for regulatory change
- You will have more time to perform more in-depth investigations, analysis and technical assistance.

Is eZ-Audit mandatory for all schools?
Beginning at the time of eZ-Audit's launch in April 2003, the use of eZ-Audit is *not* required of all schools; however, we strongly encourage the use of this new system.

eZ-Audit is designed to be extremely easy to use and to provide schools with multiple benefits to ease their annual submission process.   Some of the greatest benefits to schools include:
- instant acknowledgement of receipt – no more lost reports;
- elimination of the need to make any copies or send reports in the mail to ED;
- reduced processing times, thus allowing for remediation of findings; and
- access to the status of submission online at anytime.

Please note, regardless of whether or not the schools use eZ-Audit, OMB still requires submissions of A-133 reports to the Federal Audit Clearinghouse.

Who at the school will use eZ-Audit?
- *eZ-Audit Institution/School Administrator*, selected by the school, is responsible for:
  - o Registering the school with eZ-Audit
  - o Providing/managing access to data entry and submission approval personnel, as identified by the school
  - o Maintaining security information regarding schools users as required
- *eZ-Audit Data Entry Users*, selected by the school, are responsible for:
  - o Entering data into the eZ-Audit system
  - o Attaching non-editable, pdf files of audited financial statements and compliance audits
- *eZ-Audit Submission Approvers*, selected by the school, are responsible for:

o Reviewing the submission prior to "submit"
o Approving the submission via the "submit" action

What role should the auditor play in eZ-Audit?

Schools may choose to ask their auditor to serve as a *Data Entry User* of eZ-Audit. This means that the auditor would complete the fields in the system, and attach the audited documents in the non-editable pdf format.

It the auditor is *not* selected as a Data Entry User, the school may request that the auditor electronically sends the school their financial statements and compliance audits in the non-editable pdf format using Adobe Acrobat.

Please note that attestation of financial statements and compliance audits will be in the attachments of documents – additional electronic signatures are not required.

When will eZ-Audit be available?

eZ-Audit will be available in April of 2003. We are beginning our communication and education now, to ensure that you have all of the information and resources necessary to make eZ-Audit work for you.

When and how can I register with eZ-Audit?

Schools Registration
eZ-Audit registration is now available to schools! All schools must register in order to gain access to eZ-Audit.

On IFAP, schools will find detailed instructions for registration. To register, FSA is requesting that schools mail in a registration request letter with information such as the First and Last Name of their Institution Administrator (person the school designates to manage their access to eZ-Audit), email address, OPE ID, phone and fax number and fiscal year end date.

Again, schools should consult IFAP for detailed registration instructions.

Case Team Registration
The eZ-Audit team will take care of Case Team registration during your training session. Case Team members will only be registered *after they have been trained.* Following training, all Case Team members will receive 2 emails from the eZ-Audit team – one with their eZ-Audit userID and one with their eZ-Audit temporary password. Please login to eZ-Audit immediately upon receiving these emails to change your temporary password and ensure your access to the site is secure.

Will I still be using PEPS?

PEPS data and processing requirements will be reduced via the deployment of the new system, however not totally eliminated at the outset. To improve data quality, eZ-Audit will provide interfaces to/from PEPS and other systems, as needed.

Will training and technical assistance be available?

Yes, all case team members are expected to attend one of the eZ-Audit training sessions being offered in the regions and at headquarters. Please contact Byron.Scott@ed.gov for a schedule. Additionally, on April 1, 2003, a **Step-by-Step Guide to Using eZ-Audit** will be posted to IFAP for use by schools. We also have technical assistance available to users through a telephone hotline at 1-877-263-0780 and through email at fsaezaudit@ed.gov.

How can I learn more?

To learn more, please stay posted to CMOnet and IFAP.

I have more questions, who should I talk you?

You can send an email to fsaezaudit@ed.gov or contact eZ-Audit hotline at 1-877-263-0780.

Some frequently asked technical questions about eZ-Audit:

What type of software/technology do I need to support eZ-Audit?

eZ-Audit will be a web-based application so you will not need to load a new application on your computer. You will simply need to ensure that you have an internet browser – either Netscape 4.76 or 6.2 or Internet Explorer 5.0.

Additionally, schools will need to ensure that they, or the individual attaching their financial statement and compliance audit, have access to Adobe Acrobat writer, as all submissions must be attached in a non-editable pdf format.

How do schools get an Adobe Acrobat, pdf version of their submissions?

eZ-Audit requires schools (or their auditor) to attach a non-editable pdf version of their annual submissions. Adobe Acrobat must be used to create this attachment. Schools (or their auditor) have several *options* for obtaining Adobe Acrobat:

- Purchase Adobe Acrobat 5.0 software that will allow schools to scan paper copies of their submissions and convert them to pdf. (The retail cost of the software is approximately $250)
- Convert an electronic version of their submission (word, excel, etc) to pdf format using www.adobe.com online. (Adobe provides this conversion capability for $9.99 for one month with unlimited use.)
- Bring paper or electronic copies of their submissions to a local copying center (Kinkos, etc.) and request that they create a pdf version of the submission. (The cost of this option will vary, however $30 - $50 is a reasonable estimate.)

What if a school's firewall prevents the school from accessing eZ-Audit?

6/30/2003

If a school receives an error that does not allow them to access eZ-Audit when they type in the URL from their internet browser, they should contact their network administrator and request that he/she do one of the following:

- Open the firewall to allow access to all 165.224.xxx.xxx addresses. This will allow the school access to all ed.gov sites
- Conduct an nslookup on ezaudit.ed.gov which will allow the school access to eZ-Audit

Some frequently asked questions for School Groups (schools that complete consolidated submissions):

How is ED defining a school group?

ED considers a school group a collection of schools whereby a single school within the group (what ED calls the "submitting institution") or a designated representative (such as a State Auditor) submits a single consolidated financial statement and compliance audit for all schools in the group or sends a consolidated financial statement and multiple audits *together* to ED. (For example: ITT, State of Louisiana (who submits for all state schools in Louisiana), etc.)

If schools are part of a school group they should note the following:

➢ Members of school groups will receive an email from ED confirming their school group "membership" to ensure that the "submitting institution" is defined correctly and to ensure that all members of the group are included

➢ If schools provide ED with a consolidated submission (meaning that they submit on behalf of more than one school), **only** the submitting institution needs to register with eZ-Audit. Submitting institutions will submit for all schools in their school group. This single, consolidated submission for the school group will fulfill the reporting requirements for all schools that are part of the group. *ED does not require that non-submitting institutions in the group register with eZ-Audit.*